(4) Excise, Trade and Customs.

19. Desirability of more freely issuing licenses under the Sweet Toddy Rules.

Mr. K. Padmanabhan Channar (Member, Nominated) began by saying that the material prosperity of a State depended upon the development of indigenous industries, that all over India there was a general awakening for the revival of industries and that his prayer was to revive the dying industry of making jaggery from cocoanut and palmyra trees. That had been the chief industry of his community for a very long time but it was fast dying out, owing to the very limited number of licenses issued year after year by the Excise Department for tapping cocoanut, palmyra and *choondapana* trees. The coir industry, also peculiar to his community, had become unprofitable owing to the European War and the only other industry on which his people could depend was the tapping of cocoanut and palmyra trees for sweet toddy. The jaggery made from sweet toddy was cheaper than sugar and could be freely substituted for sugar for all practical purposes. In 1090, only 85 licenses were issued for tapping sweet toddy, while in 1091 the number came down to 80. Of the 476 cocoanut trees allowed to be tapped in 1091, 354 were in the Parur taluk. It would thus be seen that only 122 cocoanut trees were allowed to be tapped in the rest of the State. The fear apprehended by the Excise Department that, if greater liberty was given for tapping sweet toddy, it would open a door to the illicit manufacture of arrack, was groundless.

To the Dewan's remark that, in the whole of the Padmanabhapuram Division, the Neyyattinkarai taluk in the Trivandrum Division and the Shencotta taluk in the Quilon Division, licenses were not compulsory, the Member said that the exemption related to palmyra trees alone and that his contention was in respect of cocoanut trees, which were very scarce in those taluks.

The Member prayed that licenses might be freely issued for tapping sweet toddy and that the declining industry be thus revived.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

20. Modification of sections 38 and 41 of the Rules issued under the Tobacco Regulation and the construction of godowns at the sea customs and the land entrance chowkeys as also at the landing ghat near the Tobacco Bankshall at Quilon.

Mr. K. A. Krishna Pattar (Member, Trading Classes, Quilon) said that, according to section 38 of the Rules issued under the Tobacco Regulation, the licensed *melabhom* merchant was responsible for any infringement of the conditions of his license committed by his agents or persons in his employ and that, in condition xvi of rule 33, it was stated that the Government would not be held responsible for the destruction, loss or damage of any tobacco bonded or deposited in bankshalls, by fire, lightning, or any other accident or by theft, all such tobacco being bonded or deposited at the sole risk of the licensed *melabhom* merchant. By section 38, therefore, if a servant or cooly engaged by a *melabhom* merchant committed theft of tobacco, the employer was also held responsible for the former's guilt. The Member quoted instances in which the employers were called upon by the Excise Circle Officer to show cause why they should not be prosecuted for the offences committed by their agents and servants. He said that the above provision worked real hardship on licensed *melabhom* merchants. He, therefore, prayed that section 38 might be expunged from the Rules.

Section 41 of the Rules was also another objectionable provision. It laid down that no persons other than Excise Officers on duty should be permitted to enter a tobacco bankshall, except on production of a ticket of admission granted by the officer in charge of such bankshall. That provision was a sharp weapon in the hands of Excise Officers to injure those licensed *melabhom* merchants who were not in favour with them, because the latter could not enter the bankshall unless the tickets were issued in time. The merchants could not, therefore, satisfy the demands of the several retail merchants, who obtained their supply from them, with the result

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